

# MIDWEST CENTER FOR HEALTH SERVICES & POLICY RESEARCH

## NATIONAL NEWS

### ***MCHSPR Announces New Director***

MCHSPR is proud to announce the selection and acceptance of its new Center of Excellence Director, Kevin Weiss, M.D. Dr. Weiss will formally join MCHSPR on November 20, 2000. The next edition of the Newsbrief will profile Dr. Weiss and highlight his research agenda. Dr. Frances Weaver, Acting Director, will take on the role of Deputy Director of the Center. On behalf of the entire staff of MCHSPR, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Weaver for her leadership and tireless efforts to keep the Center on course over the past two and a half years.

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- ✓ ***New COE Director Named***
- ✓ ***MCHSPR IIRs Funded***
- ✓ ***Mandatory IRB Training***

### ***Garthwaite Confirmed As Under Secretary For Health***

Thomas L. Garthwaite, M.D. received Senate confirmation as Under Secretary for Health at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on September 8, 2000. In this capacity, Dr. Garthwaite will manage the nation's largest health care system, providing care to veterans through hundreds of medical centers, ambulatory care and community based

clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries and readjustment counseling centers. Prior to being confirmed as the Under Secretary, Dr. Garthwaite served as the Acting Under Secretary for Health.

### ***COE, Resource Directors Meet In DC***

The Directors of the eleven HSR&D Centers of Excellence and the three HSR&D Resource Centers convened a two day meeting with Headquarters staff September 19 and 20 in Washington, DC. Topics discussed during the meeting included an overview of the HSR&D budget, review of the results from the Letter of Intent and Scientific Review Board, a QUERI update, briefing of pending solicitations, summary of administrative issues (including final reports and the Annual Report Template), as well as a synopsis of the career development and promotions programs. Dr. Demakis scheduled time with each of the Directors to hear special concerns and review priorities of each Center.

### ***HQ Issues New SDR RFA***

Health Services Research and Development Service released a new announcement on September 1, 2000. Eligible VA investigators compete for funding to develop and maintain a VA resource and associated Web site. This site would aid VA investigators and program evaluators in identifying and selecting measurement tools for use in a range of HSR and evaluation functions. This VA-specific resource should be designed to complement existing compendiums of health measures. It should provide up-to-date information on research measures that have been used with veteran populations and on their applicability, reliability, and validity. Investigators who are interested should submit a five-page concept paper, outlining their vision of a VA HSR Instruments Support Resource/Web Site by November 20, 2000. For more information about this RFA, contact Jay A. Freedman, Ph.D. at (202) 408-3662 or [jay.freedman@mail.va.gov](mailto:jay.freedman@mail.va.gov).

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## 2001 Annual Meeting

The VA Health Services Research and Development Service is holding its 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting February 14-16, 2001 in Washington, DC. The meeting will be hosted this year by the Center for Chronic Disease Outcomes Research, the HSR&D Center of Excellence in Minneapolis, MN. The theme of the meeting, "Improving Access and Outcomes," features invited speakers, competitively selected oral and poster presentations, special topical interest roundtables, workshops, and exhibits. The location of the conference is the Renaissance Washington DC Hotel at 999 Ninth Street, NW Washington, DC. Michael L. Millenson, Member of the Health Welfare Consulting Practice of William M. Mercer, Inc. and Visiting Scholar at Northwestern University's Institute for Health Services Research and Policy Studies, Chicago, IL will be the Keynote Speaker at the opening dinner on February 14. To see an agenda or obtain additional information about the meeting, please visit the HSR&D Web Site at: <http://www.va.gov/hsrd2001>. The deadline for registration is January 5, 2001. For information regarding registration, please call Karen Hickey, HSR&D Special Projects Office, VA Maryland Healthcare System, Perry Point, MD at (410) 642-2411 ext 5448 or e-mail her at: [Karen.Hickey@med.va.gov](mailto:Karen.Hickey@med.va.gov).

### MCHSPR NEWS

## Two MCHSPR IIRs Approved

In the last Scientific Review and Evaluation Board meeting last June, two Investigator Initiated Research (IIR) proposals submitted by MCHSPR staff were approved. Funding for both projects will begin in January, 2001.

**Denise Hynes, Ph.D. and Kevin Stoupe, Ph.D.** will study the *Cost Effectiveness of End Stage Renal Disease Care*. In this prospective observational study, the investigators will identify and examine the complex incentives for care for Chronic Renal Failure (CRF) patients in eight VA facilities. A particular focus will be to determine whether costs of providing CRF care and health-related quality of life (HRQOL) differ for veterans who receive their hemodialysis at VA versus non-VA facilities. They will measure characteristics such as veterans' health status, insurance status, and distance from a VA facility to determine whether there are systematic differences between veterans who receive dialysis at VA versus non-VA facilities. By examining differences in costs and risk-adjusted outcomes, we will identify the most efficient method of providing hemodialysis and CRF care to veterans. The primary aims of the study are to: (1) Determine and compare total health care costs from the societal perspective of veterans with CRF who receive hemodialysis within and outside of VA facilities; (2) Determine and compare the HRQOL of veterans with CRF who receive dialysis within and outside of VA facilities using generic and disease-specific approaches and to calculate quality adjusted life years (QALYs); and, from the societal perspective, (3) estimate the cost-effectiveness of providing dialysis within versus outside VA facilities.

*Homeless Prevention: Psychiatric Care with Representative Payeeship* is a re-submission of **Dr. Kendon Conrad** and Dr. Atul Mahableshwarkar. The purpose of their application is to determine, in a randomized clinical trial, whether a community-based representative payee program coordinated with VA psychiatric community care (CO-RP) can be more clinically effective and less costly than customary treatment for veterans who have no representative payee (RP) or RP that is not coordinated with their care. Two hundred and forty study subjects who: 1) meet the criteria for enrollment in the CO-RP program, i.e., chiefly, at risk for homelessness due to money management problems; 2) have a serious mental illness, possibly with a co-occurring substance use disorder; 3) are engaged with the VA mental health treatment system. The study will assess utilization of services to examine the appropriateness of causal inferences as well to enable cost comparisons. It will also describe and document the implementation of CO-RP vs. customary care (using focus groups, the Client Representative Payee Interview which measures kind, quantity, and quality of money management activities, and the Representative Payee Assessment Procedure which assesses characteristics of RP resources). The implementation measures will assess dosage and enable replicability of the program if outcomes are positive or recommendations for improvement if outcomes are negative or equivocal.

## ***CSP To Conduct Methods Course***

Senior staff of the VA Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) will offer a five-day clinical methods course this spring. The objectives of the course are to teach the participants different research designs and how to conduct scientifically valid research studies. The course will be held at the Hilton Suites Hotel, Oakbrook, IL, April 2 – April 6, 2001. Those individuals interested in taking the course should send a Curriculum Vitae, along with a brief letter explaining their research interests and why they want to take the course to: William Henderson, Ph.D., Director, Hines VA Cooperative Studies Program Coordinating Center (151K), Hines VA Hospital, Hines, IL 60141 or e-mail Dr. Henderson at [Henderson@research.hines.med.va.gov](mailto:Henderson@research.hines.med.va.gov).

## ***Mandatory IRB Training***

As of January, 2001, all Principal Investigators or Co-Investigators who submit a grant to VA must demonstrate that they have undergone training related to human studies and ethics issues in research. There are a number of ways that this can be accomplished. NIH has developed a program that can be accessed through the Internet and is compliant with the mandatory training. A printable certificate is available upon completion. The Hines local Research & Development Service has purchased training booklets that are available. For further information look at: <http://ohsr.od.nih.gov/cbt/>. Be advised that no VA proposal will be reviewed after January 1, 2001 if an investigator has not completed this training.

### ***ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE***

***Diane Cowper*** was awarded a Research Assistant Professorship from the Institute for Health Services Research and Policy Studies at Northwestern University.

Both VIREC and MCHSPR lost core staff members to “greener pastures.” ***Lisa Stroud***, VIREC Program Assistant and ***George Samaniego***, MCHSPR Computer Specialist left to pursue other interests. We wish them the best of luck in their new environs.

Congratulations are extended to ***Charlesnika Mayfield*** of the SCI QUERI, on her marriage to Shayne Evans, September 2, 2000. Charlesnika and Shayne are now settling into married life after their honeymoon in Hawaii.

Nicole and Dave Sheputis are to be congratulated on their wedding, September 23, 2000. The bride's mom, ***Carol Durczak***, MCHSPR's Administrative Officer, still beams with pride when we mention the wedding! The happy couple have returned home from Aruba and are busy decorating their new home.

### ***EDITORIAL CREDITS***

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